



everyone's family

Commonwealth 2013-14 Budget *Submission*

*to help create better futures for young Australians
in need*

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A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A well educated population is the key to Australia's economic and social prosperity now and into the future. However recent national and international data confirms the significant educational challenges facing Australia. Significant numbers of children and young people are not meeting national and international educational benchmarks, performance in a number of areas has flat lined, there are major equity gaps in the performance of different groups of young people, and at the same time, many other nations have improved their educational performance.

The Smith Family therefore argues that a central goal of the 2013-14 Commonwealth budget should be to improve the educational and post-school transitions of young Australians. The Smith Family's priorities for the 2013-14 Commonwealth Budget are:

1. National educational reform, including reform of school funding and educational policy.
2. An enhanced focus on high quality career development.
3. The ongoing evolution of the Family Support Program and place based initiatives.
4. The discontinuation of the School Kids bonus and the reallocation of funds budgeted for it to other areas that support improved educational outcomes.

Through the combination in the 2013-14 Commonwealth Budget of targeted expenditure, savings initiatives and education policy reform, significant gains can be made towards achieving key national education and transition goals, both in the short and longer term.

1. National Educational Reform

Commonwealth Government School Funding

Recommendation 1

That the goal of Commonwealth government school funding be the creation of a high quality and high equity schooling system.

Recommendation 2

That Commonwealth government school funding be based on the recognition of the educational disadvantage associated with:

- A student:
 - having a disability
 - being an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
 - being of low socioeconomic status and/or
 - not being proficient in English
- The size of a student's school
- The location of a student's school.

Australian Education Bill 2012

Recommendation 3

That *meeting student need* be the first principle of the national plan identified in the *Australian Education Bill*, followed by *quality learning*.

Recommendation 4

That the Bill explicitly acknowledge in the Preamble (as a minimum), the key role Non-Government Organisations play in supporting improved educational outcomes.

School-Community Partnerships

Education policy reform needs to include systemic changes that support effective models that link community services to school. Policy should address non-vocational barriers to attendance, support catch-up learning and offer the range of support required to improve educational outcomes. Central to this are new forms of school-community partnerships, particularly in communities of significant disadvantage. Schools in these communities cannot be expected to bear sole responsibility for the educational outcomes of the children and young people in their care, given the resources available to them and the general shortfall in services and infrastructure provision that these communities experience. Non-Government Organisations have a key role to play in facilitating these new forms of partnerships. Given the historic shift now taking place through the *National Education Bill* and the articulation of the dual goals of excellence and equity in Australia's schooling system, now is the appropriate time to create a national policy framework which supports and promotes school-community partnerships given their contribution to achieving these goals.

Recommendation 5

That national educational reform include support and encouragement for new forms of deep and sustainable school-community partnerships. This should include supporting a facilitating role for Non-Government Organisations in these partnerships.

Supporting Indigenous Girls' Educational Outcomes

Australia has acknowledged the clear need to address the significant gap in educational achievement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous young Australians. *'International studies show that women have a particular propensity to lead improvements in the health and wellbeing of their families and communities and act as catalysts for social change. Because of that, investments in programs that help improve the health, education and wellbeing of women are often described as having a 'multiplier effect' based on the cross-generational benefits that those investments support'* (AMP Foundation, 2012).

Recommendation 6

That Commonwealth funding specifically for programs which support improved educational outcomes for Indigenous girls be increased in the 2013-14 budget. This should be beyond that announced in the 2012-13 budget for expansion of the Sporting Chance initiative.

2. An Enhanced Focus on High Quality Career Advancement

Nationally articulated and supported career development strategies and policies are integral to Australia's economic and social development and the Commonwealth has a leadership role to play in this area.

Recommendation 7

Australia's national career development strategy should take a lifelong perspective on career development, with priority for intensive career development support being for young Australians who are most at risk of not making successful transitions into the labour market.

Recommendation 8

Given the recognition amongst leading employers and educators that Australia has to improve work experience and careers education to better prepare young Australians for the world of work, the positive experience of the *Work Inspiration* program in the UK, and the pilots currently being undertaken around Australia, that consideration be given to the Commonwealth further supporting this initiative.

3. The Ongoing Evolution of the Family Support Program and Place Based Initiatives

The implementation of place based models has been shown to address entrenched disadvantage. The Communities for Children Facilitated Partner (CfC FP) model has been shown to be particularly effective and efficient, with return on investment over the 2005-2009 period an impressive 377%.

Recommendation 9

That funding for the Communities for Children Facilitated Partner model, which is now part of the Family Support Program, be continued beyond 2014, and that this be identified in the 2013-14 Federal budget in order to ensure no loss of momentum in CfC communities.

Recommendation 10

That as part of the ongoing implementation of placed based initiatives such as Building Australia's Workforce, closer alignment and coordination between Government agencies and Non-Government Organisations occur. This includes on the policy outcomes being sought and systemic linkages between multi-level and tiered services.

4. School Kids Bonus

The Smith Family's experience supporting financially disadvantaged families over many years has led it to the view that while the Schoolkids Bonus acknowledges the costs of education, it is not the best use of scarce government funds.

Recommendation 11

That the School Kids Bonus be discontinued as of the 2013-14 budget, with the resulting savings being re-allocated to initiatives identified in this submission, including national educational reform, school-community partnerships and those which support Indigenous girls.

B. BACKGROUND ON THE SMITH FAMILY

The Smith Family is a national, independent charity committed to increasing the educational participation and achievement of Australian children and young people in need. Our belief is that every child deserves a chance and our mission is to create opportunities for young Australians in need, by providing long-term support for their participation in education.

In 2011-12, The Smith Family supported over 106,000 children, young people and parents/carers nationally. This included:

- Over 34,000 young people on an educational scholarship.
- Close to 39,000 children, young people and parents/carers through our *Learning for life* suite including early literacy and numeracy programs, a peer mentoring reading program, primary and secondary after school support, and an on-line mentoring program for high school students to support their career and post-school plans .
- An additional 33,000 children, young people and parents/carers supported through a range of government funded programs such as the Commonwealth Government's *Communities for Children* and *Partnership Brokers* initiatives.
- Fourteen percent of the young people we support identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Smith Family has identified three long-term high level outcomes as the focus of its work with disadvantaged children and young people. They are to:

- Increase school attendance to greater than or equal to 90%.
- Increase the proportion of Year 10 students who advance to Year 12 or equivalent.
- Increase the proportion of young people in education, training and/or work post school.

These are complementary to the education and transition goals identified by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG).

This submission makes recommendations regarding Commonwealth government expenditure and savings for the 2013-14 financial year and beyond. It also makes a number of policy recommendations, given that in times of fiscal constraint, policy reform can play a particularly important role in supporting greater efficiencies and in turn, the achievement of key national goals.

C. CONTEXT: AUSTRALIA'S FUTURE PROSPERITY AND CURRENT EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGE

A well educated population is the key to Australia's economic and social prosperity now and into the future. Providing all Australians with the opportunity to realise their potential is central to enhancing Australia's overall productivity and this will benefit all Australians.

Therefore, The Smith Family would argue that a central goal of the 2013-14 Commonwealth budget should be to address the significant educational challenges facing Australia. These challenges are confirmed by recent data from the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement and the COAG Reform Council showing that:

- A quarter of Australian Year 4 students did not meet the international minimum reading standard.
- Results in maths and science have generally flat lined since 2011, with Australia's Year 4 students ranked 18th for maths and 25th for science out of 50 countries.
- Educational outcomes for Indigenous students are still a long way behind non-Indigenous students and outcomes for young people from low SES have not improved in recent years. There is a gap of up to 16 percentage points between the proportions of high SES students and those from low SES who are meeting national minimum reading standards.
- There has been no significant improvement in the Year 12 or equivalent attainment rate for 20 to 24 year olds in any Australian jurisdiction between 2008 and 2011.
- The proportion of young people successfully moving from school to work and further study in 2011 remains below the level in 2008.

In addition, the gap between Australia's performance and that of other nations, including a number of our near neighbours, is significant, placing in jeopardy our long term international competitiveness. As our population ages and our prosperity becomes more reliant on knowledge and service based industries, Australian employers will struggle to fill job vacancies unless we substantially increase the fundamental skills of young Australians and school attainment rates.

D. KEY PRIORITIES FOR THE 2013-14 COMMONWEALTH BUDGET

This data provides the context for the four key national priorities The Smith Family has identified for the 2013-14 Commonwealth Budget:

1. National educational reform
2. An enhanced focus on high quality career development
3. The ongoing evolution of the Family Support Program and place based initiatives
4. The discontinuation of the School Kids Bonus and the reallocation of these funds to other areas that support improved educational outcomes.

1. National Educational Reform

The Smith Family's highest priority for the 2013-14 Budget is national educational reform. This includes a focus both on reforming school funding and educational policy.

The Australian Education Bill 2012

The Smith Family has welcomed the *Australian Education Bill 2012* introduced into federal parliament in November 2012, given its commitment to both a high quality and high equity schooling system and the allocation of funding based on student need. The Smith Family supports the recognition in funding of the educational disadvantage associated with:

- A student:
 - having a disability
 - being an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
 - being of low socioeconomic status and/or
 - not being proficient in English
- The size of a student's school
- The location of a student's school (Section 9 c of the draft Bill).

The Smith Family also supports the development of benchmarks, outlined in Section 8 of the Bill, which aim to support improved performance of schools and students. It would argue however that these should not be used in a punitive sense, particularly at the individual school level, but rather to identify those schools where more support is required.

While supporting the general reform directions outlined in section 7 of the Bill, The Smith Family would recommend two major changes. The first is that the principle of meeting student need, which is currently listed last of the six areas identified as part of the national plan, be listed first, followed by quality learning. Reform related to teacher quality, empowering school leadership, and transparency and accountancy, should be seen as contributing to achieving the more significant goals of meeting student need and quality learning.

The second major change that The Smith Family recommends is that the Bill explicitly acknowledge in the Preamble (as a minimum), the key role Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) play in supporting improved educational outcomes, particularly for disadvantaged children and young people. The Bill currently acknowledges that strong partnerships are necessary to support all school students, 'including partnerships between teachers, parents and families and employers' (Preamble to the Bill) and this should be expanded to include NGOs.

School Funding Reform

The Smith Family is aware that the Commonwealth is still working on agreements with State/Territory Governments regarding its national plan for school improvement, prior to the enacting of the funding principles identified in the draft *Australian Education Bill 2012*. The Smith Family would urge that these principles not be watered down during the process of consultation. It would also urge that the additional resources required to be allocated by the Commonwealth under these principles be part of the 2013-14 Budget announcements, including funding for subsequent years. This will give certainty to the broad range of stakeholders interested in school education.

The additional funding required is significant but in The Smith Family's view the future wellbeing of individual young Australians, their families, communities, and the nation as a whole, requires such investment. As the Productivity Commission (2012) has recently noted:

A well-performing schooling system is fundamental to Australia's future....It is essential to foster the skills, innovativeness and adaptability needed to prosper in competitive global markets and to encourage more people to enter and remain in the workforce. Just as importantly, a well performing schooling system can promote equality of opportunity, facilitate a cohesive and inclusive society, and provide personal enrichment for individuals.

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That *meeting student need* be the first principle of the national plan identified in the *Australian Education Bill 2012*, followed by *quality learning*.

Recommendation 4

That the *Australian Education Bill 2012* explicitly acknowledge in the Preamble (as a minimum), the key role Non-Government Organisations play in supporting improved educational outcomes.

Educational Policy Reform

School funding reform should also be accompanied by educational policy reform. Resources must be used to best effect by implementing appropriate interventions, supports and pedagogies that are responsive to student circumstances and needs. The evidence of what works must be used to inform what happens in schools.

To be effective, educational policy reform must take into account the multiple factors which influence student outcomes. Professor John Hattie's meta-analysis examines six factors (the child, home, school, teacher, curriculum and approaches to teaching) and assesses their contributions to achievement. A synthesis of this research noted that:

The child or student brings to school factors that influence achievement (from preschool, home, and genetics) as well as a set of personal dispositions that can have marked effect on the outcomes of schooling. The home can either nurture and support achievement of students, or it can be harmful and destructive...positive expectations from the parents can be critical to the success of children.... (DEECD, 2010).

Students account for 'about 50% of the variance of achievement', while 'teachers account for about 30% of the variance. It is what teachers know, do and care about which is very powerful in this learning equation' (Hattie, 2003). Thus, while the role of teachers is important in improving educational outcomes, a much broader perspective is required if

Australia is to enable all students to realise their potential. The Smith Family notes the emphasis on teachers and school leadership in both the National Improvement Plan and the *Australian Education Bill*. While both contribute to educational outcomes, we cannot expect that policy initiatives focused only on the quality of teachers, school leadership or school level factors, will enable Australia to address the educational challenges it faces. As the Productivity Commission noted 'given the varied and complex ways in which these factors can influence students' educational experiences, schools workforce policy is just one part of a wider suite of responses needed to address educational disadvantage' (Productivity Commission, 2012 p 254).

Systemic Changes and Support For School-Community Partnerships

Education policy reform needs to include systemic changes that support effective models that link community services to school and address non-vocational barriers to attendance, support catch-up learning and offer the range of support required to improve educational outcomes. The current fragmented array of programs across jurisdictions and portfolios require consolidation so as to improve educational outcomes and provide efficiencies to government.

The Smith Family would argue that central to the systemic changes required are support for new forms of school-community partnerships, particularly in communities of significant disadvantage. Schools in these communities cannot be expected to bear the sole responsibility for the educational outcomes of the children and young people in their care, given the resources available to them and the general shortfall in services and infrastructure provision that their communities experience. Young people living in many disadvantaged communities have limited access to good quality sporting and cultural facilities, strong labour markets, a range of support services, and the networks that are necessary to help them get ahead.

School-community partnerships are also known in Australia as extended service schools, extended school hubs, full-service schools, or community schools. They represent a comprehensive partnership model that has been extensively trialed and evaluated, both in the US and UK. A Foundation for Young Australians literature review outlined how effective extended service school models benefit young people. They:

- Enable earlier identification of children and young people's needs and quicker access to services.
- Increase their engagement and participation in school.
- Improve their educational outcomes.
- Improve their self-confidence and well-being.
- Create a more positive school environment.
- Improve family engagement in the school.
- Build community connectedness and capacity.

D. KEY PRIORITIES FOR THE 2013-14 COMMONWEALTH BUDGET

- Widen schools' external contacts, networks and partnerships and enhance social capital. (Black et al 2010)

As well as improvements in student outcomes, school-community partnerships serve as a mechanism for developing stronger service delivery between schools and other service systems, such as public housing or health services (University of Ballarat 2011).

Governments, too, benefit from schools connecting more strongly with business and community groups. These kinds of relationships can help grow local economies and potentially reduce the costs of service provision through less duplication of services and shared responsibility (Lonsdale et al, 2012).

Particularly in times of fiscal constraint, these collaborations can both leverage more diverse resources and create opportunities for the more efficient and effective use of resources.

A number of school-community partnership approaches are being implemented around Australia, such as the Extended School Hub pilots being run by the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, in which The Smith Family is playing a lead role. Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) can facilitate deep and long-term school-community relationships which contribute to improving the wellbeing of children and young people. The rationale and evidence for the role of NGOs in these newer and deeper school-community partnerships includes:

- Creating and maintaining effective cross-sectoral partnerships that help address educational inequity is not easy (Department for Victorian Communities, 2007).
- Building and sustaining the effective partnerships required in disadvantaged communities requires a complex mix of skills.
- Facilitating deep and long-term relationships which contribute to improving the wellbeing of children and young people is a 'core competency' of many NGOs.
- Having NGOs as facilitator/lead agency reduces the burden of partnership development and management on school staff and enables complementarity with school staff's core educational skills.
- NGOs can bring a range of business, community and council groups to support educational initiatives in disadvantaged communities.
- Credible intermediaries can address school leaders' concerns regarding the match between what a school needs and what potential partners may offer. They can also help mediate the cultural barriers between sectors (Victorian Department of Education, 2009).
- The effectiveness and value of NGOs taking on a key facilitation role has been demonstrated by the evaluation of initiatives such as the Commonwealth Government's *Communities for Children* program (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 2009).

D. KEY PRIORITIES FOR THE 2013-14 COMMONWEALTH BUDGET

At their best, school-community partnership approaches:

- Acknowledge the multiple factors that influence educational outcomes for children and young people.
- Emphasise that the role of schools is to prepare young people for life and to create a foundation of learning to learn, rather than preparing them for a specific and potentially time-limited career.
- Have a strong focus on relationships, at the individual level and between agencies and institutions at a systems level.
- Have a strong focus on the voice of young people within the planning, design and implementation stages.
- Have clearly defined outcomes which are the collective responsibility of a range of parties and accountability processes which allow for ongoing improvement.
- Move well beyond 'joined up' service delivery to fundamental paradigm shifts which centre on the young-person and take account of the multiple life contexts and identities of students in the 21st century.

The Smith Family would therefore urge that alongside the fundamental reform of educational funding now taking place, there should also be reform to national educational policy to provide a framework that supports and encourages the new forms of school-community partnerships identified above. This framework would complement the goal of *empowered school leadership* by providing principals with guidance on an effective approach to improving student outcomes, particularly in disadvantaged schools.

This is particularly important given the size of the educational challenge facing Australia and that:

There were insufficient data available to establish to what extent existing programs (targeting disadvantaged students) are effective in reducing the impact of disadvantage on educational outcomes because few have been evaluated, and fewer still have been evaluated with student outcomes as a focus...The study was unable to discern the extent to which specific Indigenous and Low SES programs were effective. (ACER, 2011)

In the context of the deep and diverse partnerships required to support the achievement of educational goals for all young Australians, The Smith Family notes the important role the Commonwealth's *School-Business-Community Partnership Brokers Program* has played. The program has been a core component of the Youth Attainment and Transitions National Partnership. There is now a range of concrete examples showing how the program has facilitated significant new partnerships focused on improving educational and transition outcomes.

The Smith Family notes the program is currently scheduled to conclude at the end of 2013 and would urge that consideration be given to how best to build on the program's legacy so that the relationships established can continue and the learnings of implementing such an initiative are retained. A scenario whereby the *School-Business-Community Partnership Brokers Program* is concluded at the same time as there is no national policy environment supporting school-community partnerships is, in The Smith Family's view, highly unlikely to achieve the Government's educational goals.

Given the historic shift now taking place through the National Education Bill and the articulation of dual goals of excellence and equity for Australia's schooling system, now is the appropriate time to create a national policy framework which supports and promotes school-community partnerships, and builds on the learnings and experience of the Partnership Brokers Program.

Recommendation 5

That national educational reform include support and encouragement for new forms of deep and sustainable school-community partnerships. This should include supporting a facilitating role for Non-Government Organisations in these partnerships.

Supporting Indigenous Girls' Educational Outcomes

As part of national educational reform and as a means of contributing to COAG's *Closing the Gap* targets, The Smith Family would argue that consideration be given in the 2013-14 budget to increasing funding specifically for programs which support improved educational outcomes for Indigenous girls. This increase should be beyond that announced in the 2012-13 budget for expansion of the *Sporting Chance* initiative.

Australia has already acknowledged the clear need to address the significant gap in educational achievement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous young Australians. The recently released report *The best of every woman* (2012) produced by the AMP Foundation notes that:

'International studies show that women have a particular propensity to lead improvements in the health and wellbeing of their families and communities and act as catalysts for social change. Because of that, investments in programs that help improve the health, education and wellbeing of women are often described as having a 'multiplier effect' based on the cross-generational benefits that those investments support' (p. 8)

The report also notes that Aboriginal girls and women face a number of specific challenges in dealing with issues such as poverty and accessing education, and identifies three broad types of activities suitable for investment to help this group realise their potential:

- **Foundation programs** – that help Aboriginal women and girls to broaden the range of life and career options that they see as being available to them, set themselves positive life goals and aspirations and develop the foundation knowledge and skills they need to pursue those goals.
- **Extension programs** – that work at an individual and organisational level to help Aboriginal women and girls build on their skills and develop capabilities and networks to develop their careers and take up employment and leadership roles.
- **Enabling supports** – that help Aboriginal women and girls to access resources such as transport, child care, and financial support to make it easier to balance family, work, study and community obligations.

The best of every woman report provides clear directions for Government (and other) investment aimed at contributing to the *Closing the Gap* targets and supporting Aboriginal girls and women to realise their potential. The report notes that there are a number of programs through which Aboriginal girls are supported to access education, with the goal of those programs focusing on *student engagement* being to promote student attendance, retention and performance.

The report adds significantly to the body of evidence about what works to improve outcomes, including educational outcomes for Aboriginal girls and women. It provides clarity on the rationale for investment that supports Aboriginal girls and women and identifies the types of initiatives worth investing in. This includes The Smith Family's *Girls @ The Centre* program which is a case study under the theme of *student engagement*. The text below on the program is from the AMP Foundation report. The Smith Family would urge that consideration be given through the Commonwealth 2013-14 budget, for additional investment in programs such as *Girls @ the Centre*.

Girls @ The Centre Alice Springs, NT

Girls at the Centre is a partnership program run by The Smith Family in collaboration with the Centralian Middle School in Alice Springs. It is designed to improve school attendance, retention and performance, with the longer-term aim of improving further education and employment outcomes. The target group is girls in Years 7–9 who are disadvantaged. It focuses on Aboriginal girls but is inclusive of all girls. Approximately 80% of the girls involved in it at any one time are Aboriginal.

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The program is run out of a designated 'Girls' Room' space at the school. 'Girl Coaches' facilitate personal and vocational development on both a group and one-to-one basis. They provide support including academic support, child, school and family liaison, vocational development (eg resume preparation and other job readiness activities including a work experience/ shadowing component). Girls are also given help to meet basic needs (eg uniforms and equipment for sport) if required.

The program involves participants in:

- Sport or arts activities after school
- Sessions during school time on topics including health, relationships and vocational development
- Weekly breakfast with mentors and guest speakers
- Facilitated access to other services and opportunities for extension (eg visit to Melbourne girls' schools, work-shadowing, participation in community events).

An evaluation of the program was recently conducted by Associate Professors Tess Lea and Catherine Driscoll from the University of Sydney, through funding provided by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. Data included in the evaluation shows that:

- Program participants consistently had average school attendance that was 15% or more higher than the average attendance of all Aboriginal girls at the school.
- 90% or more of Year 9 students who participated in the program progressed to Year 10 and 90% of those who participated at Year 9 level in 2008 progressed to Year 12 in 2012.

Data collected by The Smith Family also indicates that all Year 9 girls who participated in the work shadowing component in 2011 secured part-time employment.

The evaluation concluded that the program:

- Is highly valued by school staff, participants and their families
- Positively impacts on life goals and skills in demonstrable ways
- Appears to positively impact on Year 12 retention
- Clearly impacts on community engagement with the school, especially through families, and
- Significantly impacts on school attendance. (p. 54)

Recommendation 6

That Commonwealth funding specifically for programs which support improved educational outcomes for Indigenous girls be increased in the 2013-14 budget. This should be beyond that announced in the 2012-13 budget for expansion of the *Sporting Chance* initiative.

2. An Enhanced Focus on High Quality Careers Development

There has been no significant change in Year 12 or equivalent attainment between 2008 and 2011, and more significantly there has been a significant decline over the same period in the percentage of 18 to 24 year olds engaged in education, training or work. Only 72.5% of that age group were engaged post-school in education, training or work (COAG Reform Council, 2012). This is despite significant national policy efforts focused on improving youth attainment and transition.

A National Career Development Strategy

The Smith Family is aware that the Commonwealth Government, through the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) is developing a National Career Development strategy. The Smith Family supports the view that nationally articulated and supported career development strategies and policies are integral to Australia's economic and social development and that the Commonwealth has a leadership role to play in this area.

The Smith Family supports a lifelong perspective on career development, however it strongly recommends that any strategy, including associated funding, ensures that the provision of intensive career development support should be prioritised for young Australians who are most at risk of not making successful transitions into the labour market, given the data on poor transitions which is included in this submission.

The Smith Family would argue that a national careers development strategy should be informed by the following principles:

- An evidence based approach to the development and implementation of the strategy and related initiatives.
- Career development should be embedded within a broader suite of programmatic responses with the needs of the students placed at the core of the programmatic response.
- Flexible and responsive service delivery: A range of delivery methods including online and telecommunications technology, face-to-face interactions, as well as group and individual-based work should be used. Programs should include structured career development activities such as skills mapping and transferability; researching and analysing specific jobs and required qualifications and work experience; identifying alternative TAFE, university and/or apprenticeship pathways; mentoring programs and experiential careers days.
- Strengthening parents' skills, capacity and knowledge so they are able to provide broad, well-informed and supportive career guidance to their children needs to be an important focus.
- Delivery in partnership with schools, and, with community agencies, industry groups, employers and/or educational institutions.

D. KEY PRIORITIES FOR THE 2013-14 COMMONWEALTH BUDGET



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- A place-based approach that builds and strengthens the local support networks of young people and their families. This allows for responsiveness to local labour market conditions and the range of potential training, education and employment outcomes available.
- Programs need to be designed, developed and implemented within an evaluation framework that incorporates outcome-based accountability.

New responses to support improved pathways and career outcomes: *Work Inspiration*

In the context of a national strategy for career development, The Smith Family would also draw attention to a new initiative, *Work Inspiration*, which has been driven in Australia by The National Partnership Broker Network. *Work Inspiration* is an employer-led initiative developed by Business in the Community in the UK (see http://www.bitc.org.uk/workplace/talent_skills/work_inspiration/).

The program has three core components:

1. **All About Me** – a conversation about the young person's interests, aspirations and character.
2. **Look Behind the Scenes** – to support the young person to become aware of a range of occupations in the workplace.
3. **Careers Happen** – a conversation with an employee/employer about how their career journey has unfolded which leads to reflection by students, and to consideration of their own plans and hopes

The way these are delivered is flexible, enabling lead employers to tap into their creativity and expertise and offer students an inspiring mix of activities. Experience in the UK has shown that students feel more confident in the workplace and more positive about their careers and what they need to do next, following involvement in the program. The program is also seen as a useful recruitment tool which acts as a 'fast track' to an apprenticeship.

Work Inspiration pilots are currently underway across Australia supported by the Partnership Brokers. They are taking place in metropolitan and regional centres and involve a range of corporates across a diversity of industries, as well as a number of NGOs. This includes Woolworths, Yamaha, Stockland, a consortium of agricultural employers, Bendigo Bank, Foundation for Young Australians and The Smith Family. The diversity of organisations participating augurs well for its future expansion. The learnings from the pilots will be documented early in 2013 to inform how it can be best delivered in Australia to suit employers and young people. The Smith Family is in collaboration with the Foundation for Young Australians and the National Australia Bank to become founding partners as part of a planned national roll out in mid 2013, in association with the national Partnership Broker Network, DEEWR, other corporates and employer organisations.

Given the recognition amongst leading employers and educators that Australia has to improve work experience and careers education to better prepare young Australians for the world of work, the positive experience of the *Work Inspiration* program in the UK, and the pilots currently being undertaken around Australia, The Smith Family would urge that consideration be given to the Commonwealth further supporting this initiative.

Recommendation 7

Australia's national career development strategy should take a lifelong perspective on career development, with priority for intensive career development support being for young Australians who are most at risk of not making successful transitions into the labour market.

Recommendation 8

Given the recognition amongst leading employers and educators that Australia has to improve work experience and careers education to better prepare young Australians for the world of work, the positive experience of the *Work Inspiration* program in the UK, and the pilots currently being undertaken around Australia, that consideration be given to the Commonwealth further supporting this initiative.

3. Ongoing Evolution of the Family Support Program and Place Based Initiatives

The Smith Family strongly endorses the implementation of place based models to address entrenched disadvantage. Research and The Smith Family's experience in nine Communities for Children Facilitated Partner (CfC FP) sites has demonstrated that a holistic 'whole of community' approach is most effective in increasing access to services for all families in the community, especially those who are vulnerable.

The national CfC FP model has been shown to be particularly effective and efficient. Investment in this initiative over the 2005-2009 period was upward of 100 million dollars and return on investment was an impressive 377% (Access Economics, 2010). Place based models thus require significant, long term financial investment for meaningful social returns.

The Family Support Program, of which CfC FP is now a part, has evolved significantly and The Smith Family is aware of the Commonwealth's recent discussion paper on the program's future directions. It is also aware that current funding for CfC FP expires in 2014. Given the clear national and international evidence of the merit of this type of approach, The Smith Family would strongly urge that the program be continued beyond 2014 and that this continuation be identified in the 2013-14 Federal budget. Having certainty that funding has been allocated beyond 2014 will ensure no loss of momentum in CfC communities, including the potential loss of staff and organisational capacity which occurs when there is financial uncertainty. Identification of funding in the 2013-14 budget can be separated from the process of determining how that funding might be allocated.

Part of the significant evolution of place based initiatives in Australia in recent years has been the implementation of the *Building Australia's Future Workforce* (BAFW) initiative in 10 trial sites. This initiative has brought both significant opportunities and challenges. Better integration between levels of Government and between Australian Government departments, not only at the service delivery level but at the policy and program design phases, is critical to ensure that responses to support vulnerable families are coordinated and built on existing service infrastructure.

D. KEY PRIORITIES FOR THE 2013-14 COMMONWEALTH BUDGET



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The implementation of BAFW has demonstrated that for young parents and jobless families to access appropriate services, the Department of Human Services, the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and DEEWR have to align the outcomes sought and coordinate the policy response for better engagement and referral of these cohorts to NGOs. The Smith Family would urge that continued efforts be made in this area. It would also argue for better systemic linkages between multi-level and tiered services and across streams under the Family Support Program. This would include for example, developing referral protocols and or partnering arrangements based on extensive service mapping; enhancing coordination activities that promote a seamless client journey; and embracing opportunities to embed a 'no wrong door' policy. Such policy reforms should be included as part of the 2013-14 Commonwealth Budget in order to maximise the likely achievement of the goals of current place based initiatives.

Recommendation 9

That funding for the Communities for Children Facilitated Partner model, which is now part of the Family Support Program, be continued beyond 2014, and that this be identified in the 2013-14 Federal budget in order to ensure no loss of momentum in CfC communities.

Recommendation 10

That as part of the ongoing implementation of placed based initiatives such as Building Australia's Workforce, closer alignment and coordination between Government agencies and Non-Government Organisations occur. This includes on the policy outcomes being sought and systemic linkages between multi-level and tiered services.

4. School Kids Bonus

The Smith Family has been providing *Learning for Life* (LfL) educational scholarships to thousands of financially disadvantaged families for many years. The financial component of the scholarship is a recognition of the significant costs to families of meeting the range of educational expenses incurred by their children. However, The Smith Family's experience is that while the financial contribution will no doubt help the low income families we support, money alone is insufficient to address the range of challenges being experienced by many of them.

At an aggregate level, the families that The Smith Family supports through an LfL scholarship have the following profile:

- Parental education: For over half of our students, neither parent/carer has finished Year 12.
- Household structure: Almost 60% of our students are from single parent families.
- Employment: 68% of our students live in jobless households.

Focus groups conducted in 2011 with LfL parents/carers highlighted that families were facing a range of issues that went well beyond financial needs and included:

- Parental ill-health
- Children with a learning difficulty, autism or in ill health
- Language difficulties
- Lack of formal and informal support networks and limited access to services
- Supporting a number of children in out-of-home care or fostering arrangements
- Lack of knowledge of the Australian education and employment systems
- Financial pressures that were not just related to education.

In light of this and the evidence of effective interventions, the LfL program not only offers financial support but also provides supportive relationships with a Learning for Life Worker and sponsor, as well as access to a range of learning support and mentoring opportunities. This includes programs targeting parents/carers. LfL is therefore targeted investment which provides holistic support aimed at improving the educational outcomes of disadvantaged children and young people.

D. KEY PRIORITIES FOR THE 2013-14 COMMONWEALTH BUDGET

Participants in the focus groups acknowledged the value of the financial part of the scholarship. However they also highlighted a number of areas that went well beyond a financial contribution, where they particularly saw the need for their child and family to be supported in order that they could achieve educationally. These areas included:

- Programs to improve literacy and numeracy
- Support with pathways planning, careers and employment
- After school initiatives.

The Smith Family's experience supporting financially disadvantaged families over many years, and informed by hearing directly from some of the families receiving this support, has led it to the view that while the School Kids Bonus acknowledges the costs of education, it is not the best use of scarce government funds. If the policy intent is to ensure that young disadvantaged Australians get the most out of their education and are able to significantly improve their educational outcomes, The Smith Family would argue that the initiative should be discontinued as of the 2013-14 budget. It would also recommend that the resulting savings be re-allocated to initiatives identified in this submission under *National educational reform*, including school-community partnerships and initiatives which support Indigenous girls.

Recommendation 11

That the School Kids Bonus be discontinued as of the 2013-14 budget, with the resulting savings being re-allocated to initiatives identified in this submission, including national educational reform, school-community partnerships and those which support Indigenous girls.

Conclusion

Given the national educational challenges facing Australia and the centrality of education for individual and society long term wellbeing, The Smith Family would urge that national educational reform be a key priority for the 2013-14 Commonwealth Budget. It would urge that this reform involve both school funding and policy reform. It would also urge additional funding and policy reform to support school-community partnerships, Indigenous girls and a national career development strategy. The Smith Family would also argue that ongoing support be provided to the Communities for Children program. Finally it recommends the discontinuation of the Schoolkids bonus and the reallocation of funds to national educational reform.

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